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ABSTRACT

Historically, general education has held a higher status than career training. Vocational programs were modeled on those existing in trade schools, while general education stressed personal development. At present, career education has gained greater acceptance and status. Present occupational programs have improved due to greater experience of the staff and better planning. No longer is a liberal arts education required to precede career career training; personal and social development can now take place effectively in occupational programs, enabling one to develop one's ability to think and communicate effectively. In the future, individualized programs in career education will be available to all individuals who need them. Students will assume greater responsibility for their education, pursuing in-depth study in various fields. Another anticipated development will be the incorporation of ethnic studies as an integral component of liberal arts studies. (SE)

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CAREER EDUCATION AND ELITISM

The title assigned to this panel is a puzzling one and I, too, had problems with its proper interpretation. Career Education is what the Community Colleges have been doing well for many years. Elitism is a term generally used when discussing access - it is the antithesis of the established Community College position of being the Open Door, equal opportunity institution.

As I reflect on this title, the message that seems to come through is:

"That Community Colleges advising students to enter career training programs are somehow stiffling their intellectual, personal and social development."

"That that portion of our offerings labeled liberal arts or general education have a higher status than career training and that students in those areas are the Community College elite."

This position is not a new one. It has been under discussion ever since the junior colleges were established and will continue to be a lively topic for many years to come. It certainly won't be settled today.

I feel that I can contribute most to this panel by looking at the relationship between career training and general-liberal education from three perspectives.

1. An historical perspective

2. A current perspective

3. A future perspective.

In the beginning most of the junior college students were part of what is now described as flow - recent high school graduates generally ineligible for matriculation at four-year college majoring in lower division subject. Some, usually the least promising, majored in vocational subjects.

The decision to major in a vocational field was made after some directive counseling with a heavy reliance on measurement through interest and aptitude testing. The practice was to delay the career decision by keeping the student in general education and a university program as long as he showed promise of success. General education and vocational education were thought to be sequential. The students career decision was felt to be irrovocable and constituted a firm commitment to abandon forever the pursuit of a college degree.

The early occupational programs were modeled on those existing in trade schools and as a result were developed with the help of an advisory committee with representation from labor and management. They were terminal and prepared for entry level positions. The potential for upward mobility in the chosen career field for the occupational major was not then realized or even considered.

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The programs were campus based although even then in some programs work experience was provided at the job site. Junior colleges were two-year institutions, therefore, most programs were designed to last two years. In settings where the junior colleges had evolved from trade schools, occupational programs of shorter duration were found.

The career programs were held in low esteem by faculty, parents, and students. Instructors were credentialed under Smith Hughes certification and their second class status was more real than imagined being reflected in their salary and working conditions.

General education was incorporated in the early junior college programs so as to distinguish them from trade school programs. The pioneers recognized the obligation to provide education for personal development and even then looked on general and occupational as partners in the education of the whole student.

A number of general education courses were mandated for those seeking an Associate in Arts degree; these were prescribed by statute or administrative decision or both. Some schools mandated a general education core of some twenty or thirty units. This procedure widened the breach between academic and occupational faculties since it reduced that portion of the curriculum devoted to occupational education. It usually failed to produce the desired mini-Renaissance man because it imposed general education on not too interested students who were taught by faculty whose enthusiasm for the chore parallel that of the students enrolled in their classes.

In spite of all this, career education persisted, grew and gained greater acceptance. The present respected status of career education testifies as to the effectiveness of the ground work laid by our early junior college leaders. For this we are indebted to them.

Present Perspective

The occupational student of today is better informed about his career field. He may have even started his program in a high school, in a business or industrial art program or a program especially designed to articulate with one in the Community College such as Feast or Pre-Tech.

He may be flowing through school or may be re-entering from the general population. On our City College of San Francisco campus we have identified 500 students holding college degrees usually in liberal arts now majoring in photography, horticulture, allied health and other programs leading to interesting and profitable careers.

The current student recognizes his right to choose his career, the decision is his. It has been reached with some counseling of a less directive nature by a professional counselor who is too often unjustly maligned. The counseling may have taken place in high school, on campus, or in one of the community agencies that are in increasing number, providing such services. We are becoming increasingly aware that guiding students in these decisions is no longer the exclusive province of the campus staff.

Present occupational programs as might be expected are improved. This is due to the greater experience of the staff and the increased cooperation of labor and management who through experience with some of the program graduates

have come to respect the quality or preparation of their products. They are generally well planned and in many colleges reflect quite closely the employment pattern of the community they serve. Experience has demonstrated that although they generally prepare for entry positions, there is ample opportunity for upward mobility. Graduates advance rapidly to supervisory and mid-management positions.

They are open ended not terminal. Graduates in increasing number find their way into bachelor degree curriculums. Experience has shown that many of the students when involved in relevant studies are turned on and achieve on a level not previously attained. An extensive follow up of graduates of our Hotel and Restaurant program showed that twenty-five percent attained college degrees which is about the same number as achieved by transfer aspirants.

Four year institutions seeking to increase career options for students are making continuing education more attractive by providing majors in areas such as Engineering Technology and Allied Health. Our own San Francisco State University has developed a Design and Industry curriculum that allows the City College occupational major to add to his community college units a related upper division program leading to a bachelor degree.

The programs are campus based but because of the greater acceptance more off-campus experiences are provided and in most programs a bridge between the college and the job is provided by meaningful industry based work experience. The poorest kept secret is that community college students are no longer two year students. On the one hand many are taking five, six and even seven semesters to complete their occupational curriculum and on the other more mature and better prepared students are completing their preparation in one year or less.

Career programs are developing their own elite. Many are well paid executives, supervisors, department heads and very successful self-employed entrepreneurs.

General education for self-development is still an important part of the occupational curriculum. It is generally no longer mandated. We learned through bitter experience during the campus disturbances of the 60's that students had a right to make decisions relative to their own education. As a result imposed course requirements have given way to breathe requirements providing students with multiple options in each area. Flexible provisions make it possible to excuse older students or those with previous college from these requirements. We are no longer upset if a student forfeits graduation by electing to not meet any general education requirements or developing his own program for self development.

The traditional sequence of having liberal education precede career training is no longer sacrosanct. We are comfortable having career training precede or parallel general education. We are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that much of the personal and social developments that was formerly believed to result only from general education takes place and for some more effectively, in occupational programs. It is possible in an occupational program to develop one's ability to think, to make judgments, to discriminate, to communicate effectively and to improve skills in human relations.

I always found it rewarding to take visitors into a program designed for the less verbal students, dental technology for example, and ask one of these students to guide the visitors through the laboratory communicating effectively and enthusiastically the nature and extent of their program. It were as though through this relevant experience they had received the "Gift of Tongues."

Finally we realize that the process of personal as well as career development is a continuing one. People, the environment, and jobs change, the body of knowledge and information continue to explode. General and career education is now and will continue to be a lifelong process.

Future Perspective

High school graduates will continue to flow into the Community Colleges. However, as we come to learn to better serve those who are described as "new learners" they will come in greater number. Our enrollment will be swelled with adults re-entering the educational mainstream. We will address ourselves to the educational needs of all adults including the educationally and economically disenfranchised and the many handicapped adults. For example, we are presently exploring the establishment of a career program for the mentally retarded, preparing them for routine tasks in laundries.

The process of assisting in career decisions will be less institutional. The necessary information about one's self and available opportunities will come from many directions. Community based counseling centers and agencies will assume a greater role, the media already is starting to provide better career information.

Career education will be more tailored to the special need of the client. At one end of the pole we will develop short term programs preparing for a specific job, retraining others who are employed in special skills or for new tasks. In cooperation with CETA, we have developed a pre-committed job program in banking. The student is promised a specific job on completion of a training contract of approximately sixteen weeks. The immediate promise of a job has increased the staying power of the educationally and economically disadvantaged and has resulted in a very high retention rate. Expanding technologies will lead us to break the two-year barrier and offer three and four year curriculums in fields such as allied health, court reporting and engineering technology. Education will become less circumscribed by time frames. Credit, certificates and degrees will become less important as both career and general education come to be recognized as a lifetime process. Education will be entered, interrupted and re-entered as needed.

Courses and programs will be taken where people live and work - ghettos, barios, industrial parks, downtown and civil service centers.

Students will assume greater responsibilities designing their own programs for self development, for intellectual growth and for aesthetic enjoyment. The role of curriculum committees and administrators will change - they will be less likely to prescribe the approximate dosage of general education.

The explosion of knowledge, information and learning material will cause us to reconsider the value of breathe requirements. We may think more in terms of longitudinal requirements allowing students to pursue in greater depth one discipline such as art, music or psychology. We will probably

recommend in depth study of an interdisciplinary nature allowing students to address themselves to problems such as population, energy and environment.

In planning we will recognize that we as Americans have a common heritage but we will better recognize that we are a pluralistic nation with a very diverse population. That each group has its unique heritage. That if they are to achieve the desired self acceptance and personal development they must be afforded an opportunity to study and understand their differences. It is just as important to the Filipino, the Latino, the Chinese or the Black to develop these understanding as it was to me to study French as the son of immigrant parents. In this context ethnic studies will become an equal and integral component of liberal studies.

We will recognize that personal, social and intellectual development are not our exclusive province; that the schools are but one agent in the process. TV will become an increasingly important contributor producing more programs such as Civilization and the Ascent of Man. The radio, the library, the museums, the art gallery and the bookstore will be accepted as partners.

The true elite will be those who are leading a full and satisfying life. Those who have a feeling of importance and worth. Career education is certainly not alien to this goal.